

March 8, 2022

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

I, Carl Guerriere, Interim Director of the Center for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Capital Community College, (grant-funded position) am writing in support of HB 5300 so that some sense of democracy can prevail and the people can have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the merger of the community colleges.

Please give our legislators the opportunity to vote against this enormously misguided attempt that has been a sham.

Our community colleges serve more students than the four-year colleges. Our graduates stay in Connecticut and make a difference. Our community colleges serve the populations that could help remove our shame as the state with the largest educational and economic disparity in the nation. If properly supported, community colleges can be our most significant strategy to close this shameful and debilitating educational and economic gap. Our community colleges change individuals' lives, families and communities. We must continue our colleges' important role of improving the lives of our more marginalized populations. Students of color, first-generation college students, immigrants and women represent a major part of our student populations.

The current approach to merging our colleges has wrecked havoc on our system. I have never seen morale so low as this expensive, top-down approach dismantles efficiencies and adds expensive administrators, yet purports to put students first. Change is messy, but this has been a disaster.

Several systems have been centralized and the results have been dismal. Most notable is HR. This summer I was on a search committee only to discover that no one in the new, centralized HR confirmed the job description with our college. As a result, an erroneous job description was advertised, people applied, candidates were reviewed, only to discover that someone didn't realize that it was a teaching position. After months of work, the search had to be thrown out and the position still has not been filled. I started the process to fill a position last May. It is still unfilled. Numerous examples such as this have occurred all over the state.

Every aspect of our system, recruitment, placement testing, registration, advising, curricula, etc. is being changed. Purported best practices are being implemented too fast and inconsistently often with disastrous results.

Help protect the Community Colleges. While the leaders of this effort frequently state the consolidation is to achieve equity, the reality cannot be further from the truth.

Thank you.